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Friday, March 22, 1940

I often wonder what bearing all these abstract and high-brow discussions have on the humdrum life of human beings. The following items which I shall record deal with the mutual conflicts of people which arise out of their being thorns in each other's side. The conflicts will apparently go on like the weather, regardless of all attempts of moralists, social reformers and revolutionists to change the world.

About ten days ago Mrs. Irving Friedman came to see me. She is an only daughter of the Manns who were members of the SAJ. I officiated at her wedding about seven years ago. She has now a child of five. Her husband is a son of the Friedmans; his mother is the president of the organization which supports the institution for the blind known as the "Lighthouse." The Friedmans have lost their money and the young Mrs. Friedman (apparently at the instigation of her parents) divorced her husband. He has refused to consent to the divorce which she got at Reno. She cannot therefore be married in this state, but she can get married in N.J. or Conn. She is now considering getting married ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ and to please her parents she came to ask me I should persuade her former husband to grant her a Jewish divorce. I suspect that her parents probably thought that getting a Jewish divorce would enable her to get married in this state, because I can hardly imagine that they would care sufficiently for Jewish law to wish to comply with it to that extent.

I felt I had to do my duty and to use my influence with her former husband's parents to see to it that she obtain a Jewish divorce. Expecting resistance on their part, I came to the SAJ Board meeting Wednesday a week ago and suggested the appointment of a committee of Jewish law and custom to deal with situations





of the kind described above. But fearing that the matter would be unduly delayed, if left to a committee, I arranged to have the mother of Irving, Mrs. Friedman, come to see me. She came last Saturday with her husband. When I told them what I wanted them to do Mr. Friedman simply wouldn't hear of it. He felt that the Manns had wronged them too deeply and he didn't see how Irving could consent to grant a Jewish divorce after having refused a secular divorce. The mother thought that I had called them for the purpose of suggesting a reconciliation. Both of them spoke well of the young woman and put the blame entirely on her parents. After much urging I got them to promise to deliver the message, which they did. During the week Irving called up and definitely refused ~~my~~ request.

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The second item is Milton Rubin's troubles. His father's life insurance which the companies paid up after long negotiations because of technicalities, brought about ~~\$200~~ \$420,000 to the American Silk Mills which Milton is running. His father also left large debts outstanding. In the meantime Arthur Rubin, aided by his ~~max~~ brother-in-law, Harold Linder, is pressing Milton to pay out to him and his three sisters their share in the business -- \$500,000. <sup>When</sup> ~~When~~ the demand was first made he was willing to give \$350,000. Later as he learned of the large load of debts his father had left him, he apparently reduced it to \$300,000. He maintains that it would ruin the business for him to take out that much cash from it in one lump sum. He would not scruple going into court with the claimants, but he is afraid that his brother Harold, whose life hangs by a thread, would collapse if this family quarrel were to become known to him. He came to ask my advice. I suggested to him to refer the matter to an arbitration committee.





I have not heard the other side of the story. But from my knowledge of Arthur, Harold Linder and the girls, I am inclined to believe to a large extent Milton's version of the quarrel. It is no doubt true as he said, that in the mind of his brothers and sisters he figures as the heir in spirit as well as in Business of the father Edward, who was an erratic and impossible person, especially when it came to money matters. But on the other hand, they too have inherited those very traits for which they condemn their father. And as for Linder, he is a hard-boiled fellow who has made a large fortune through a lucky deal in mining stocks, and is out to drive a bargain. The case of Arthur is especially intriguing. He has a keen analytic mind of the legalistic type and has been caught up by the neo-Thourist trend which is being fostered in the University of Chicago. He talks as though he actually believed in supernatural revelation as the main if not only source of religious truth, and has no use for modernist religion. He even carries out that belief, I am told, in the way he attends daily minyan to say kaddish for his father. But his conduct in relation to money matters proves how just such mentality is compatible with the utmost lack of consideration for others, even with a kind of inhumanity. When, e.g. Milton was trying to convince him to wait with his claim because there were large contingent liabilities, Arthur countered with the statement that there were also contingent assets. "What were those?" asked Milton. "You know Harold can't live long and you are going to get his \$300,000 insurance," replied Arthur. A person with a background such as Arthur's who can speak in this cold blooded fashion of his brother for the sake of pressing money claims that can afford to wait demonstrates the impotence of high ideas and ideals in influencing character. Perhaps if he had been brought up in a more wholesome environment he might have been





more human. And all that should be expected of ideas and ideals is to improve environment but not the human impulses as such.

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Last night I attended the meeting of the Special Committee of the Seminary on Teachers Institute. The chairman of that committee is Edgar Nathan, a mere figurehead. He, together with Finkelstein and Oppenheimer represented the Seminary Board. When I got word of the meeting I was worried; I thought perhaps Finkelstein was up to something that he wanted to put something over on me. I was confirmed in my fears when I learned that Dinin and Chipkin had not been asked to come. They were invited later, after I called up Finkelstein's secretary and said that I wanted them to be present.

Thank God the meeting took place without any untoward incident and that it has not upset my peace of mind.

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Sunday, March 24, 1940

I am very doubtful whether it will ever be possible to render public worship as intrinsically indispensable to people as it was in the past when it had a theurgic significance. It is more likely to be dispensed with altogether, unless some one invent for it a therapeutic value that is compatible with reason. Among us Jews attendance at public worship on the part of those to whom it has no theurgic significance is dwindling so rapidly that I doubt whether many more new synagogues will be built in neighborhoods with a permanent Jewish population.

If there ~~were~~ were still any vitality in us Jews we would be evolving esthetic values to take the place of the theurgic values which are becoming defunct. How little we do of that was again borne in on me last night at the SAJ Purim social. It was





modelled somewhat on the lines of the night club. After a silly little sketch called "The Minyan Murder Mystery," the piece de resistance was the exhibition of a new dance by a professional dance couple. The dance, I believe, is called Kanga. They are patronized by Harry Liebovitz and his wife, who make it a point to cultivate dancing. Although they are way in the fifties and Harry has the figure of a bear, they take their dancing very seriously. When the young people who arranged the affair were at a loss what to do to make it interesting some one suggested having Liebovitz's dancing couple exhibit their dancing. This they did with ~~xxxxx~~ excellent skill and taught the young people the new dance step. Everybody was happy, and described the affair as a huge success. Mrs. Isaacson, the wife of one of the members, sang three songs -- German, English and Italian -- and for encore sang a Hebrew song. A few community songs dealing with Purim had been prepared but the people never got to them.

For this kind of thing we have to be a people apart, and to be made the butt of hatred, ridicule and persecution.

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The unique contribution of Greek philosophy to the evolution of the human mind is no doubt its calling attention to the need of subjecting the process of knowing as such to close scrutiny. Without a dependable theory of knowledge all speculation about being is merely mythology. Actually very little progress can be said to have been made in epistemology. Superficial philosophers like Durant deride epistemology as being useless logomachy. At the present time I am reading with the men of the seminar which meets every other week on Thursday nights, Garnett's Reality and Value. I find the discussion there of epistemological problems very helpful in my general thinking and vice versa.





Take e.g. the question whether the categories of thought are to be regarded with Kant as forms of the mind which are impressed upon the "hyle" of experience or are they to be regarded as coming with the experience itself? I find in my own work on "Modern Trends in Judaism" an answer to that question. In order to form an organic conception of traditional Judaism I find myself making use of such categories as "sancta" the contrast between theurgic and natural, between this worldly and other worldly. According to Kant these categories would have to be regarded as a priori and part of the mind. The fact, however, is that they are part of the very experience characterized as modern. The same may be said with regard to the categories of cause etc. This confirms Garnett's view in his "Reality and Value."

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Tuesday, April 2, 1940

Yesterday my brother-in-law David Baron died suddenly. He was 73. He was simple and unassuming but managed to get more out of life than most people with unlimited ambitions. He was a loyal member of the SAJ -- which is something that cannot be said about very many of the members, unfortunately. His home life was idyllic. All in all he proved that one does not have to possess much knowledge or wealth to master the art of living.

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Last Sunday night a meeting of the Reconstructionist Foundation took place at my home. The only one of the Park Ave. Synagogue contingent who was present was Heimsfeld. All the rest were either members of the SAJ or of the Editorial Board. The occasion for the meeting was the question of enabling Eugene Kohn to get \$2000 for the year as his salary for his work on the magazine, Shir Ha-dash, Haggadah, etc. Most exasperating is the indifference of





Milton Steinberg upon whom we had counted to infuse some enthusiasm into his people. Instead he even refused to sign a letter that had gone out to his members asking them to become \$5.00 members of the Foundation. Of 1000 letters which had been sent out at an expense of \$35.00 only seven brought replies.

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Wednesday, April 3, 1940

Rabbi Jacob Grossman has been pestering me for some time that I should permit him to organize a group of Seminary graduates who would meet with me to discuss with them anything that was on my mind. Having a secret hankering after some group that would stimulate me into further elaboration of my ideology, I finally let him go ahead with the rounding up of about ten or a dozen men he might run into. This morning I had my first session with them. Present were, besides Grossman and myself, the following: Lewis Grossman, Radin, Zimmerman, Arzt, Jacob Neuman, R. Leon Hurwitz (whom I had told Grossman not to invite because of his obstreperousness), I. Hoffman, Parzen. Two or three others were prevented from ~~far~~ coming.

I discussed with them the problem arising out of the traditional attitude implied in the assumption that the Jews should be different in their mode of life from the Gentiles -- the thought stressed in the Midrash on (p.127) in which the moon calendar is given an illustration of the extent to which Israel is

Using the Socratic method I led the men to the conclusion that nationhood -- which gives the Jews the opportunity to express their difference in terms of otherness instead of essentially in terms of difference in belief and practice -- possesses the moral advantage that it spares the Jews the necessity of appearing to be prigs in their relation to the Gentiles, and that it permits of a wide diversity of belief and practice within a framework of unity among themselves.





I had Zimmerman accompany me home and take lunch with me. What he told me about his experiences in the ministry indicates what an unfathomable gulf divides discussions like the foregoing from the disgusting realities of synagogue Judaism. This is the fourth year since his graduation from the Seminary, and he is holding his second position in the ministry. His first position was with a recently formed congregation in Albany. There are about 6500 Jews in Albany. The oldest is the well known Reform congregation into which all belong who are on the uppermost rung of the Jewish social ladder. The remainder is divided among six mutually competing congregations. The leaders in Zimmerman's congregation were the following: the chairman of the education committee was a modern Hebraist who had his child take Hebrew lessons with Zimmerman but who insisted that he teach the child nothing but modern Hebrew literature. He didn't want the child to hear about "Humesh," Rashi or Talmud. This man is a druggist, who as a side line sold heroin. The chairman of the membership committee was one who was in with a political gang that grew rich from the sale of policy numbers. Another important member was a butcher who under the egis of kashrut sold trefa meat and grew rich. When he was finally caught red handed by a government inspector he had to close his store. After three months he reopened it again as a kosher butcher shop. The orthodox rabbi of the town forbade anyone to buy his meat as kosher. While the rabbis were agitating against him he ordered Zimmerman not to interfere. The members of the congregation continued their patronage, for fear that if they discontinued he would resign from membership and they would be out by that much in income.

Zimmerman's present position is in Bayside. He has to teach daily three hours to prepare bar mizvah boys for their stint,





to preach, lecture and organize adult classes. For all that work he is paid \$2200. Of that amount the children bring in about \$2000 in tuition fees. To prevent him from making appeals for any cause the Board of Trustees passed a law forbidding anyone to solicit any funds whatever. When Zimmerman suggested that he would like to go to a number of people individually to collect money for Palestine, etc. they told him he would then have to collect also his salary.

According to his description of that community, the prospect of its ever becoming interested in Judaism is very remote. How little knowledge background they have can be illustrated by the fact that when he was giving a lecture on Akiba a woman asked him whether Akiba had any family connection with a certain Rabbi Akiba in Brooklyn. It is said that when Finkelstein's book on Akiba appeared some Jewish English journal from California wired asking for a picture of Akiba and some personal details about him. They said they wanted to feature him in a special number they were about to issue.

After getting this earful about the vulgarity and barbarism of our laity Ben Rosen who is executive director of the Talmud Torah Association of Philadelphia came to see me this afternoon and the tale he unfolded about the conspiracy of the conservative rabbis in Philadelphia - Klein, Neuman, Greenberg, Mortimer Cohen, Friedman, Greenstone and Bargel - to prevent his heading the contemplated Bureau of Jewish education, made me realize to what filthy politics our so called modern rabbis are ready to stoop in their greed for power. The need which the rabbi has under the present communal set up to seal himself and to dramatize his personality in order to keep his position has much to do with the egocentrism which is so characteristic of most men in the rabbinic profession.



Friday, April 5, 1940

Yesterday I visited the Hebrew School "Talmud Torah Ahavath Achim" 1741 East 3 St., Brooklyn. It is conducted by Jerome L. Hershon who is being considered for the demonstration school which the Teachers Institute might organize if the Jewish Education Committee will supply the necessary funds. The plan is to take over the school which exists now at the Synagogue of the Ansche Chesed Congregation on West End Ave. at 100 St. Hershon has for the last eight years been connected with the above mentioned school. The reason that he is being considered for the demonstration school is that he is practically the only principal of a school who has made a serious attempt to work out a Hebrew curriculum on progressive lines. He himself gives all of his time to the school and has succeeded in getting his teachers to put in five to six hours daily preparing their lessons. They teach three hours daily. The children attend  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours five times a week and services both Friday night and Saturday morning. The number of children I believe is 150. The school is maintained by tuition fee (the children pay 75¢ per week) plus contributions by the members of the synagogue and one or two theatricals. The school facilities are very poor. There are three teachers. One of them uses the traditional method, while the other two use progressive methods. Hershon and the teachers devote considerable time to the preparation of the necessary materials. Teachers' guides, pupils' guides, work-books, etc.

There is no question that Hershon and the teachers are straining every bit of energy to make a go of Jewish education. But as I watched the teaching I was sick at heart on account of what seemed to very amateurish results of all the energy that has been invested in the experiment. I am very doubtful whether very





many of the children really know what the whole thing is about. This business of making the writings of the prophets pivotal in Jewish education seems to me to be all wrong. How can eleven year olds appreciate the significance of the prophetic denunciation of the social evils of their day? It seems to me that the traditional approach which centered upon the Torah and Rashi was much more pedagogic in that it is much more adapted to the mental level of the child.

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At the editorial board meeting of the "Reconstructionist" I happened to say that we ought to do more book reviewing in the magazine. Rosenthal who had been asked to take charge of the book review department made me undertake to write a review of Infeld's book "Israel in Spengler's Decline of the West." Although it meant an additional interruption in my work on "Modern Trends," I had to comply because I don't have the courage to ask any one to do work unless I set the example.

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Monday, April 8, 1940

Cyrus Adler and some personal reminiscences

Cyrus Adler died last night. The funeral will take place tomorrow from his late home in Philadelphia. I recall his having said some years ago at a banquet in his honor that he had written in his will that no eulogies be pronounced at his funeral.

I cannot talk very kindly about him because he never liked me. My very first contact with him was one of conflict. That was in 1902. The Seminary was then in the process of re-organization. Adler was then head of the committee which, having come into possession of ~~new~~ new funds contributed by Schiff, Marshall, the Strausses, Lewishohn, etc., was about to take over the old Seminary. When the old Seminary had become bankrupt they decided to





reorganize it and to invite Schechter to head it. In order to start out with enough students to justify engaging a new faculty in addition to Schechter, and to be able to graduate a class after two years instead of four, the outgoing class of 1902 to which I belonged, and which had stayed in the Seminary about eight years, was told that it was expected to stay two years at the new Seminary, after which it would be graduated. There were about five or six of us who had counted on getting our rabbinical degree in 1902. We had been led to believe that by the late Joshua Jaffe who was our instructor in Talmud, by Bernard Drachman who taught us Bible, Jewish philosophy, history, etc., and by the then existent Board of Trustees, among whom were Simon Roeder, Rercivaã Menken and Max Cohen. The late Pereira Mendes was acting president (I believe). The entire affair was a ramshackle condition and we students were anxious to go out into the world. Nevertheless, we would have been perfectly ~~happy~~ happy to continue studying another two years. But we were told that we were to be put together with the new students and to be taught the same subject matter at the same time with them. No account was to be taken of our having spent eight or more years at the old Seminary. Knowing as I did who some of the new students were to be and how completely ignorant of Jewish knowledge they were, I for one resented being put into the same class with beginners. Charles I. Hoffman who was then a man of 35 with a wife and five children, who had been a Philadelphia lawyer and who had made up his mind to go into the ministry, was to be one of the new students. He had engaged me to read with him the Makilta, and I realized how little Hebrew ~~he~~ knew. I thought it would be ridiculous for me to be put into a beginner's class. None of us had any idea of the cycle system which Schechter was planning to introduce.



I was at that time president of the student society known as the Morais-Blumenal Society and we formulated a letter in which we asked that those of us who were about to be graduated should have our previous work taken into account and not be made to sit together with beginners. For daring to make such a request Adler came specially from Philadelphia to give us a bawling out and telling us that it was impudent on our part to send such petitions. Abramowitz, Kavar and Israeli were graduated in June of that year (1902) and they got out of town positions. I did not get any position so I attended courses during 1902-1903. In the fall of 1903 I was given charge of the school at Kehilath Jeshurn and had to preach once a month. From that time on (1903-1904) I became somewhat irregular in my attendance at the new Seminary, and made no attempt to be graduated again. Elias Solomon was the only one of our group who complied with the new arrangement and received his rabbinical degree from the new Seminary in 1904.

At one time during my ministry in Kehilath Jeshurun (East 85 St.) I was so unhappy with my work that I wanted to quit. Before doing so I went to see Adler in Philadelphia. I don't remember now what made me go to him for advice. I wanted to go into selling life insurance and I probably expected him to give me the necessary recommendatio . (Incidentally that was not the only thing I wanted to escape to from the rabbinate. At one time I wanted to take up farming and join an agricultural school.( When I told him what I had in mind to do he pooh poohed the idea, and told me that when I felt depressed the best thing was to take a long walk and the blues would disappear. He said that that was the way he would overcome his own jimjama.





It seems that in 1909 when Schechter offered me the principalship of the Teachers Institute and he apprised Adler of that fact, Adler was not altogether happy about Schechter's selecting me for the Institute post. As a matter of fact I owed that post to a chance remark that Miss Szold let drop about my religious school at the 85 St. congregation. Somehow she had learned that I had built up a successful school and she mentioned that fact to Schechter. One day in June 1909 I was holding forth to the Alumni of the Seminary on the need for a copernican revolution in our thinking about Judaism (see introd. to "Judaism as a Civilization") and Schechter was present and joined in the applause when I got through. The same morning he invited me to his office and offered me the position. Apparently he then wrote to Adler, and he must have gotten in reply a letter questioning my fitness for the position. This is the inference I draw from Schechter's reference to me in Bentwich's biography of Schechter.

In the course of my stay at the Seminary there was a time when they thought of grooming me for the presidency, first Schechter and then Adler. But I made myself impossible when I began to publish my views. During one of the years that Schechter was away from the Seminary, when he took a trip to South Africa to visit his older daughter who was then married to a certain Alexander, I started a seminar with a group of the more advanced students. I believe it was in 1911-12. At the Seminar I began developing my new outlook on Judaism. The freedom from the rabbinic yoke was exhilarating (and Schechter's absence was also helpful) and I gave free reign to my eagerness to find some solid intellectual basis for Judaism. When Schechter came back and heard about the seminar he was quite put out and he said to me: Listen here, I am here (at the Seminary) to teach theology. You can teach your theology





at the Teachers Institute. At some time later I had occasion to show him the interpretation of Genesis, which I had worked out and which I then expected to publish some time. I made no secret of my departure from the traditional view of the Torah. He returned the manuscript to me with a few dissenting comments. Not long after that he tried to interest me in working on the text of (p.132)

in the hope that I would have something to my credit in text scholarship and at the same time be diverted from my theological speculations. My first article in the Menorah got Schechter wild with anger because I dared to question his view about dogmas in Judaism. He said he would answer me in the Menorah. But he died before he had a chance to do so.

Adler too entertained for a while the idea of grooming me I believe, but time and again I made myself impossible. Every additional article of mine that appeared in the Menorah helped to alienate him from me. This was especially the case with the one in which I refer to the stories in Genesis as half-mythological. He took me violently to task for daring to use such an expression about the Bible. Another occasion when he delivered a broadside against me was in January 1922 just as I had broken with the Jewish Center and was about to launch the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. The occasion was a paper I read on "The Place of the Synagogue in Jewish life" in the auditorium of the old Seminary building on 123 St. at an annual convention of the United Synagogue. In that paper I gave expression to my newly acquired ideas on the relation of the synagogue to the rest of Jewish life. In a talk which Adler gave in the afternoon of that day he berated me in no uncertain language. The only one who ventured to come to my defense was Eugene Kohn. All this happened while I was outside the auditorium.



The last staw must have been my resignation from the Seminary with a view of accepting Wise's invitation to join the Jewish Institute of Religion. It was about that time that Finkelstein was drawn into Adler's orbit and since then his star has been rising. Nothing would make me happier than to see Finkelstein succeed in putting the Seminary on the map. All I pray for is that he should learn to be honest, to say what he means and mean what he says.

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Tuesday, April 9, 1940

As one of the four "senior" members of the Seminary Faculty I was asked to attend the funeral of Cyrus Adler, which was to be strictly private from his home in Philadelphia. I arranged with Prof. Ginzberg to meet with him at the Penn. Station this morning and he, Marx and I sat together and talked about all sorts of things on the way to Phila. When we got to the house I found it to be very old fashioned and drably furnished. There must have been about 100 people distributed in four rooms, two on the lower floor and two on the upper. A. A. Neuman (rabbi of the Mikve Israel Synagogue and the member of the Dropsie Faculty whom Adler groomed for the presidency of Dropsie) officiated. He read a few Psalms in Hebrew and English and delivered a prayer in which Adler's were mentioned. The car in the funeral cortege in which Ginzberg, Marx and I sat was Solis Cohen's. After the funeral we were treated to lunch at a club to which Cohen and his friends belong and at 3:00 we took the train back to N. Y.

On the way back we talked again about all kinds of things. Never in all the time that we were together did any one of us mention Finkelstein's name.

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Thursday, April 11, 1940

Teachers College Unit Course

This has been a rather unusually happy day for me. In the morning I gave my fourth lecture of the unit course at Teachers College and I was pleased with the way I delivered it and with the way I answered rather ticklish questions put to me by orthodox hecklers both Jewish and Christian. The Jewish hecklers were the graduates of the Yeshiva and the Christian heckler was a graduate of Princeton Theological School, who is filled with missionary zeal. The fact that I did not begrudge my time and spent an hour or two thinking about the outline which was the basis of the lecture made it possible for me to look at the people while I was lecturing instead of looking at the notes.

Milton Steinberg

The second occasion for satisfaction was my conference with Milton Steinberg. I had been provoked against him lately first because of what I had heard concerning his attitude toward Maurice Samuel's criticism of his book, and secondly because of his failure to appear at important meetings both of the Reconstructionist editorial Board and of the Rec. Foundation and to bring any of his congregation into line for the Recon. I had finally decided that nothing would be gained by sulking or bearing a grudge against him, and that the sensible thing to do was to awaken in him a sense of responsibility for the progress of Recon. I asked him to come to see me, and when I did so I intended to take him to task for his negligence and lack of cooperation. But upon thinking the matter over I realized that that was not the way to get his cooperation. Instead of rebuking him for what he had not done, I asked him what he thought all of us ought to do to speed up the R. movement. He replied that what we need is to dramatize the movement and he suggested that we spend two weeks going from town to town in evangelical fashion and





bring the message of R<sub>e</sub>constructionism to the Jewish masses. A campaign such as that, ~~d~~ adequately publicized would focus attention upon our movement. He promised he would be willing to take part in that campaign. I was so thrilled by his interest and enthusiasm that I promised to contribute \$300 toward conducting it. For once it was necessary to impress our people with the fact that the R. group was in deep earnest about its ideals. We decided that such a campaign ought to be launched some time in November.

### Reconstructionist summer conference

The other matter I discussed with him was the Summer Institute. I had prepared in my mind a tentative program and by the time I was through discussing it with him the program assumed quite definite shape. We agreed that what was needed to make R. understandable was not merely a set of general principles, but a kind of "Shulhan Aruk" that would provide the Jew with a regimen of conduct and reflection for all sorts of situations and occasions. With that end in view we should conduct the summer institute over a period of two weeks at Grossman's camp. The discussions should deal with the following topics and be led by the following men: 1) A Reconstructionist Credo - Kaplan; 2) A regimen for individual and domestic use - Steinberg; 3) Communal organization included function of synagogue - Kohn; 4) Jewish cultural activities - Eisenstein; 5) Jewish Education - Dinin; 6) Jewish group relations, including problem of anti-semitics; 7) Palestine.

The discussion of each topic should last two successive mornings, one morning to be devoted to orientation, the other to implementation. An interesting suggestion that developed from our discussion was that in the contemplated code, we should have three levels of attainment, a minimum, a normal and a super-normal.

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Tonight I had over to my home the members of the Seminar in religion which I had been conducting biweekly this year. During the year I met the students at my office in the Seminary, but this being the closing session I had invited them for a general discussion and refreshments. The following who constituted the seminar group came: Kazis, Silverstein, Kliers, Winokur, Waxman, Tennenbaum, Kolatsch, Schwartz, Gordon, Goody, Chertoff, Dembrowitz and Rosenberg. I had read with them Knudson's Personalism and Gannett's Reality & Value (about 150 pages).

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Wednesday, April 24, 1940

Yesterday I spoke on "The Last Tyranny." I worked very hard in preparing the sermon because of the intrinsic difficulty of the problem which I tackled. That problem is: what shall we Jews do when we realize the true nature of anti-Semitism as the concomitant of the tyranny of the masses? In contrast with the first three estates, or the classes, which had an interest in saving us from the onslaught of the masses at the same time that they invited the masses against us, the latter have nothing but hatred for us, a hatred implanted by the Christian myth and fostered by the Church. The fact that Germany, in her propaganda by which she expects to disrupt the various governments of the world in order to facilitate her penetration into their countries, makes use of Jew hatred to denounce as Jewish any and all forces that stand in her way renders our predicament more tragic than it has ever been. The frightening fact about this new tyranny of the masses who are coming into power is that they possess all the stigmata of the organized mob which knows neither reason nor pity. I believe that the emergence of this new psychological phenomenon - the collective or mass mind endowed with power -- is more than the economic factor for the understanding of what is happening in the world today.





I had to fall back on the belief in God as the only solution.  
In the words of the psalmist (p.135)

That entire psalm 94 records an experience strictly parallel to our own in the face of the menace of anti-Semitism. It is the outcry of one who seemingly was just as puzzled and perturbed as I am. He calls on God to appear and render to the arrogant the punishment they deserve. His solution resolves itself to the affirmation that God will punish the evil-doers who crush His people. I mentioned that in my sermon and added that I did not regard his entire argument convincing. It seems to me that a more feasible solution is that implied in the rabbinic conception of God Himself as in need of redemption . I pointed out that the will-to live that is in us compels us to conclude that this mass tyranny cannot represent the last word in human development, because it is bound, first, to convert mankind into breeds of termite-like colonies engaged in eternal warfare with one another, and then to destroy the human race entirely, because the human termites are armed with every conceivable instrument of destruction. Such an outcome is a sort of ~~reductio ad absurdum~~ reductia ad absurdum which the human mind cannot contemplate. Hence the truth of the words of Micah .

If American democracy were at least comparatively free from the deep corruption which is evidenced by the scandals reported daily, and which is mainly responsible for the likely emergence in this country of the mass tyranny, it would be possible to pray that America be drawn into the present war so as to hasten the downfall of Germany. Under the circumstances, however, all we can pray for is that this mob tyranny crack up from within, and that the divine in man compel him to heed the dictates of reason and pity.





Whether the ~~the~~ foregoing argument is sound or is merely whistling in the dark, it is all I can think of as a means of keeping up our morale in the face of the growing tide of hostility; This is not just ordinary sermonizing. It is a serious mental resource on which we have to fall back in a time of real danger. This last Sunday as I was on my way to the Institute I was accosted by a young Irishman with the words, "Hello Doc! Hitler is coming over and he's going to put things right." For hours afterward I was so agitated that the experience left me weak.

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Wednesday, May 1, 1940

On Monday, the 7th day of Pesah, I preached on "How to Keep Up Our Morale." I made a special effort again to get a firm hold on the sermon so that I would deliver it effectively. Although such efforts exhaust me they at least save me from the blues which I experience every time I gave a poor sermon. Of the twelve sermons I gave this year, only two were below par.

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The second seder was held at the SAJ house and was participated in by about 110 people. We tried out the Revised Haggadah and it proved to be satisfactory.

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At the meeting of the Seminary Discussion group this morning the following were present: Jacob and Lewis Grossman, Schwartz, Arzt, Parzen, Miller, R. L. Hurwitz, Hoffman and Radin. Excused J. J. Newman.

I conducted the discussion as though it were that of an editorial board meeting. I called for subjects which the men wanted to have discussed, spent some time on discussing them and then assigned them for short papers to be presented at the next meeting.



Radin wanted the idea of the "Chosen People" to be reinterpreted. Hoffman raised the question what should be our policy with regard to the committee of the Rabbinical Assembly on Social Justice in view of the fact that some members of the Assembly object to cooperation with the CCAR. The reason for their objecting is that the Orthodox rabbinical organization refuses to cooperate with the RA even on the problem of social justice. Miller wanted to know what should be our attitude with regard to the new law which called for an hour's release for religious instruction. The other questions suggested were the following: Our part in good-will movements, Jewish community councils, the training of laymen for intelligent conduct of congregational affairs and religion in Jewish schools.

On the new law with regard to religious instruction I suggested that the RA take immediate steps to interest Jewish public school teachers in the problem, that resources be found to obtain places for religious assemblies and that the hour be used not for instruction but for inspiration and as an entering wedge for interest in a more intensive curriculum. Miller was asked to look up the law in detail and to report on the suggestions made in the discussion.

With regard to the good will movement the discussion led to the following generalization: All direct efforts at good will are a failure, because the Catholics refuse to participate and the Protestants lose interest, so that only the Jews alone remain. Hence it is only by the indirect method of carrying out some ~~xxx~~ civic projects in common that good will can best be created. These indirect means must be of two types: those in which individuals of the different groups meet in common as individuals and those in which they meet as members of groups. Hoffman was to deal with possibilities of the latter type, and Radin with those of the former type.

Every one present was asked to do some thinking on the question





of training the laity for intelligent management of congregational affairs. Lewis Grossman promised to bring a report on the proposed constitution for congregations drawn up in the 1918 CCAR Year book.

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This evening as I was eating supper a messenger brought a letter signed by Sol Stroock, member of the Seminary Board of Trustees, apprising me of Finkelstein's election to the presidency of the Seminary.

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This afternoon Rabbi Max Routtenberg of Reading, Pa. came to induce me to take part in the convention of the RA scheduled to take place the last week in June in Detroit. Some time ago he had written to me I should speak at the banquet on my experiences in Palestine. I had replied that I couldn't promise to come to Detroit. But when he came to see me I explained to him that I did not have anything special on Palestine that I cared to discuss in a brief after dinner talk. He then asked me to go on the program of the convention and discuss the place of the rabbinate in American-Jewish life. After considerable hesitation I accepted.

He mentioned an interesting fact. The principal teacher of his religious school is a graduate of the Yeshivah. At first this man would have nothing to do with Reconstructionism. He happened to have become interested in the Reconstructionist magazine and now he waits impatiently for each number to arrive. This change in attitude, said Routtenberg, is reflected in the improved character of his educational work.

Recently he had occasion to explain to a Hadassah group of about 30 women the nature of Reconstructionism. The effect on the group was electric. They seemed to experience a sense of real spiritual awakening.



This report of Routtenberg contrasts with the one I heard yesterday from Rabbi Burnstine who called on me. When R. Burnstine asked Israel Goldman of Providence to get his people to subscribe for the Reconstructionist Goldman refused. He gave as a reason the fact that he had tried to get his people to observe Kashrut and keep the Sabbath and was on the point of succeeding, when I came along and upset his efforts by giving expression to the views on these matters in "Judaism as a Civilization." When Burnstine asked the same thing of Rabbi Simon Greenberg, the latter replied he doesn't want to be a press-agent of the Reconstructionist.

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This evening I spoke to Simon H. Rifkind about becoming a member of the Board of Directors of the Reconstructionist Foundation. He is a graduate of the Teachers Institute and is now a very successful lawyer, being a member of Senator Wagner's law firm. He accepted the invitation.

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When Rabbi Henry Fisher of Rochester, a Seminary graduate and a classmate of Ira's, was asked by Burnstine to get some of his members to subscribe to the Reconstructionist, he refused on the ground that Rabbi Philip Bernstein of the same city, who is a graduate of the JIR is one of the contributing editors of the Reconstructionist. The mean competitive spirit which prevails among the rabbis in matters that affect the very existence and future of our people is most contemptible and disheartening.

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Thursday, May 16, 1940

The entire time since the preparation of the Pesah sermon I have been in very low spirits. It was then borne in on me as a result of my analysis of the world situation that we Jews are practically doomed, and that thought haunts me every waking moment.





The recent victories of the Nazis in Norway, Holland and Belgium and the dark outlook of the Allies, together with the likelihood of our getting into the war almost make it impossible for any gleam of hope to break through the dark cloud of despair which hangs over my mind. The worst of it is that my work, instead of distracting me from all these dark forebodings, continually keep me aware of them. I have to preach and lecture on what to think and what to do in this crisis. Like a captain leading his band to a forlorn hope in battle I must combine for myself and for others the experience of expecting the worst and hoping if not for the best at least for some good. That is no easy matter.

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I was at work for almost three weeks until last Sunday night on the paper "The Implications of the World Jewish Situation for Jewish Cultural Life in America" which I am scheduled to read next Wednesday at the Pittsburgh Convention of social workers, center workers and educators. At present I am working on the paper "Religion in the Jewish School" which I have to read at the educators convention the morning after.

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Last Sunday I addressed a group of thirty graduates of the Hebrew High School. It was a "pep" talk for the purpose of arousing in them an appetite to apply for admission to the Teachers Institute of the Seminary College of Jewish Studies.

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Sunday night the first meeting of the Reconstructionist Foundation took place. Guzik presided. His presiding was anything but inspiring. The speakers were Steinberg, Ira, Eugene Kohn, Michael Alper and I. The analogy of escaping <sup>into</sup> the ~~xxx~~ cellar <sup>while</sup> as the house is being bombarded and discovering the foundation itself is



unsafe that the pillars (faith, loyalty and creativity are tottering) to the situation in which we Jews are at present, struck home. (The evils which attack those pillars are superstition, sabotage and aridity.)

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Tuesday night Rosen brought with him from Philadelphia Joseph Kohn and they had dinner with me. Rosen wanted me to put some starch into Kohn who is an influential member of the Federation there. If Kohn were not a typical unreliable liberal I could have routed the eighteen Philadelphia Conservative rabbis who have ganged together for the purpose of asserting their power. They want to ? (p.138) in a rabbi into the position which would be created, if all the religious schools, communal and congregational, would unite. I on the other hand had hoped that the visit would lead mainly to Kohn's becoming interested in the Reconstructionist Foundation. But it turned out to have been entirely in the interest of Rosen. I denounced the rabbis for their attitude which will disrupt the proposed organization of the schools and furnish the assimilationists in Federation an excuse for washing their hands off entirely from responsibility for the communal schools. But when they left I was not satisfied that the issue was as clear cut as I had thought it was, and was somewhat annoyed that I was being used by Rosen to pull chestnuts ~~xxx~~ out of the fire for him.

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Yesterday morning the Seminary discussion group met. Present were Jacob and Louis Grossman, Schwartz, Parzen and Hurwitz, Hoffman, Zimmerman and Goldberg and Radin. Excused Arzt and Miller. The discussion proved quite fruitful but not fruitful enough to make me want to meet with them again, so I called it a day. I shall refuse to have anything to do with groups of that kind unless those who are to join will undertake to write out their thoughts and suggestions in full.





Azriel Eisenberg, a graduate of the Teachers Institute, who has been active for many years in the field of education is at the head of the Jewish Educational Bureau in Cincinnati. He worked out a modern Haggadah on the basis of a new kind of Mah Nishtanah. The four questions are pertinent and vital in present day Jewish life. For answers to them he used material from the Reconstructionist. I was especially delighted to see that he used the letter which Eugene Kohn, Ira and I had worked out together in reply to a letter by a woman in Pennsylvania who wanted to know why we insist on remaining Jews.

It occurred to me as soon as I saw this modern Haggadah that it would be an excellent idea to publish it together with the more ambitious and more traditional one we worked out. To those who observe a second seder, or for those for whom our revised Haggadah is still too traditional, this modern Haggadah ought to appeal very strongly. I hope this suggestion will meet with the approval of the rest of the Editorial Board. I had no difficulty in convincing Ira and Eugene.

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Friday, May 17, 1940

Alex Dushkin is having his hands full with the assimilationist members of his Jewish Education Committee. They are out to sabotage all efforts to introduce anything into the Jewish school curriculum that has a bearing on Palestine. Hexter, Willen and Edward Warburg are the most aggressive assimilationists intent upon combating the least trace of Zionist influence. Ed. Warburg married a gentile and tries to assert his independence of the little Jewishness that had inhered in his father the late Felix M. Warburg.

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If I am not mistaken Kadushin's coming to N.Y. at this time is not just for the purpose, as he said, to work on the Mekilla. I think it is part of a little scheme Finky has up his sleeve, namely to appoint him lecturer in Systematic Theology. It seems that Finky has dropped the idea of having Steinberg as lecturer. He senses that Kadushin has broken away from the type of thinking which I have been urging as essential to the reconstruction of Jewish life, and has become an apologist for tradition. The organismic thinking which has become an obsession with Kadushin has the semblance of striking an original note in Jewish theology, and does actually warrant - if true - a certain intellectual chauvinism very much akin to that developed by the Nazis. In a time such as this chauvinism is what the average person wants in answer to the chauvinism of which he is the victim. I can sense how Solomon Goldman and Simon Greenberg have found in Kadushin's organismic thinking just what they need to reenforce them in their chauvinist obscurantism. They in all probability have led Finky to consider Kadushin as the proper man for the lectureship in Systematic Theology, even to the extent of forgiving him his close association with me in former years. I have a suspicion that Kaddy's self elimination from the Reconstructionist Editorial Board, and repeated refusals to write articles for the magazine are due to his desire to free himself of his earlier association with me as a disciple, so that it would not count against him with the Seminary authorities, first Adler, then Finkelstein. If this change has actually taken place in his attitude toward my philosophy of Jewish life -- and I believe it has -- I do not in the least blame him for wanting to dissociate himself from me, or for having the ambition to teach his own kind of Jewish theology. If he will only remain open and above board with me and do nothing to sabotage what I am trying to do my friendship for him will be as warm as ever.





Monday, May 21, 1940

I completed last Saturday night the paper on "The Teaching of Religion in the Jewish School" which I am to read at the convention of the National Council for Jewish Education this Thursday. The working out of it came somewhat more easily than that of the paper which I have to read Wednesday night. Now that I am done with both of them I am glad that I accepted both invitations. Despite the apparent reasonableness of my approach to the problems of Jewish life and thought, it has so few exponents that if I or Ira don't present it, it goes by default. The fact that I was away two years from the Seminary and the Teachers Institute means that the graduates who have not had my courses constitute an addition to the forces of confusion and befuddlement in Jewish life. In having given up the Jewish Center I have allowed it to become a citadel of Orthodoxy. And now if I were to withdraw from participation in convention programs like those of the two organizations I am scheduled to address this week or that of the Rabbinical Assembly at the end of June in Detroit, I would leave the field clear for the forces either of obscurantism or of escapism.

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Last Sunday night I took part in the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the SAJ. The meeting was fairly well attended. Of the original 22 organizers of the Society there were only 4 present. Ira pointed out it was the 10th anniversary of his having become associated with the Society as Executive Director. In my talk I stressed the fact that they should realize the difference between Reconstructionist Judaism and the kind of Judaism which is usually taught elsewhere, viz: either obscurantist or escapist.

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In spite of preoccupation with our own immediate affairs we cannot possibly forget what is going on in Europe these days. The mind is simply paralyzed with dread of the outcome of the rout which the Allies are suffering at the hands of the Nazis who it appears have already reached the Channel and will probably occupy Paris in a few days. What is going to happen to us Jews, to Palestine, to all our hopes and dreams? Will America really stay out of the war, and will Germany reduce France and England to the status of Czechoslovakia? Will she succeed in destroying forever the promise of a rational, free and just world which was implied in the French Revolution and the establishment of the United States of America? Despite the worst that may befall, we have to plan and work as though life had meaning and a future.

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This afternoon I presided at a special meeting of the Teachers Institute Faculty called for the purpose of <sup>getting</sup> ~~gathering~~ their approval of the plan to cooperate with the Jewish Education Committee in using the school which meets at the Anshe Chesed Synagogue as a demonstration school. In the course of the meetings Scharfstein aired his complaint against Dinin for not having been consulted about the organization of the proposed staff and curriculum. I succeeded in getting the approval of the Faculty and in handling Scharfstein's complaint satisfactorily. It was the first time practically that I conducted the meeting in Hebrew, where I had to deal with delicate matters which required careful phrasing in order to prevent the members of the Faculty from going off into polemics, and I am glad to note that I succeeded in holding them in rein.

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Friday, May 24, 1940

It is some time now since I have taken part in annual conventions. I rather enjoy being together with a lot of people who are actively concerned in problems of Jewish life, although to very many of them I suspect that concern is essentially of a job-holding character.

I got to Pittsburgh Wednesday morning and put up at Hotel Wm. Penn where the 1940 Conventions of the three organizations were taking place: the National Conference of Jewish Social Welfare, National Association of Jewish Center Workers and National Council for Jewish Education. Ira Eisenstein and Henry Rosenthal were with me most of the time during my stay at Pittsburgh.

Wednesday afternoon I took in two sessions. One was on "How the Center Develop and Encourage American Jewish Art and Expression;" the other was on "Research and Reports" (in Jewish Education). At the first of these sessions I was especially interested in the remarks of a Dr. Gall, a church organist who has organized for the Pittsburgh YMHA a choral group which devotes considerable attention to Jewish music. About 40% of the group are gentiles. His main point was that the Jews themselves are not interested. "Their apathy to Jewish music," he said, "is unbelievable." At the other session I heard Jacob Golub read a paper on the lines of research that ought to be conducted in Jewish education. Although what he said was true I felt that at the present time we cannot afford to divert the energies of those who are engaged in Jewish education from the more immediately urgent tasks of creating in the parents a desire to send their children to a Jewish school and developing content of instruction in the Jewish school.

In the evening (Wednesday) I gave my talk on "The Implications of the World Situation for Jewish Cultural Life in America"



before a large gathering at the Ball Room under the auspices of the three organizations. The prepared address would have taken 1 hr. & 50 minutes. Fortunately I had sense enough to omit parts of it and to get it down to 1 hour. It was listened to very attentively and seemed to express what most people felt was a timely message. Subsequently, however, I learned, as I shall have occasion to record, that there was another reaction to it. The discussants were D. M. Dushkin, S. C. Kohs and Louis Kraft.

Yesterday morning I read my paper on "The Teaching of Religion in the Jewish School" before the National Council for Jewish Education. The paper was well received. The discussants were Rabbi Brickner of Cleveland and Dr. Louis L. Kaplan of Baltimore. Others who took part in the discussion were Hurwich of Boston, Gamoran and Rabbi Mishkin of Chicago. Hurwich and Mishkin tried to present the case of orthodoxy. Kaplan who seems to be intelligent ~~and~~ suffers from some kind of lag in his thinking.

In the afternoon I listened to Dushkin's paper on his approach to his task with the Jewish Education Committee here. The discussion indicated to me that the principle of diversity in unity is accepted if at all as a matter of expediency, but that the acceptance of it as a norm of Jewish civilization is scarcely even considered.

Last night the National Council for Jewish Education were the guests of Charles Rosenblu, President of the Pittsburgh Federation at the dinner given to them in the Cardinal Room of the hotel. He himself was toastmaster and the speakers were Dr. Louis Kaplan (Chairman of the NCJE), Rabbi Freehof and Mark Eisner. Kaplan in the first part of his remarks pointed out that this was just the time to demonstrate our faith in God as the power that makes for





salvation. But then he assailed the spirit of self-criticism in which we indulge. He deplored its psychological effect. I took his remarks to pertain to my talk of Wednesday night. If that was the case, I am sorry to find that a man of his ability should lend aid and comfort to our own demagogic forces which hamper the process of self-correction in Jewish life. This is what I had reference to when I said above that possibly there were many who were displeased by my denunciation of the escapists. But Freehof was the limit. He too tried to find fault with the attempt to get at the meaning of the God conception and then launched into a whiny diatribe against the schools for not teaching the Bible. From the way he spoke one might infer that he would have his people read nothing but the Bible. He actually deplored the reading of many books, but the fact is that he makes the reviewing all the latest books the chief attraction of his preaching activity. Seldom if ever does he lecture on any of the books of the Bible. The impression his talk gave was that of reflex action. He stands up, closes his eyes, tunes in on his nasal whine and the sentences just form themselves mechanically. He is a typical false prophet.

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Sunday, May 26, 1940

Today was my closing session at the Teachers Institute. The course known as Religion 5-6 given to third year students was based on the chapter on Judaism in Moore's History of Religion, Vol. II, and the course Religion 7-8 given to fourth year students consisted during the first term of the discussion of the three functions of religion -- intellectual, emotional and voluntaristic, and during the second term of the conception of God as the power that makes for salvation. I used during the second term the Hebrew translation of "The Meaning of God..." etc.



The students of Religion 5-6 were few in number and of poor calibre, with the exception of two or three. Those of 7-8 were many (about 32) and constituted a wide awake group. The courses were conducted for the most part in Hebrew. I resorted to English at times at the request of the students when it would have been hard for them to express themselves in Hebrew.

Apparently the students of Religion 7-8 enjoyed the course. When I was through they handed in a petition I should teach them also next year.

Miss Goloshevsky approached me before the class began with the problem how to teach the children the observance of the mizvot. She said that there was much disagreement among the students as to the importance of kashrut, Sabbath observance, etc. and that there was much confusion and uncertainty among the rabbis. As instance of the latter she quoted a rabbinical session which took place recently and at which the question of what to teach concerning the mizvot was discussed. She mentioned the case of a child who had been taught about kashrut but at whose home it is not observed. The parent complained to the rabbi that the school was introducing friction between her and her child. When the question was put, what should be done in an instance of that kind, Boxer advised that kashrut should be taught "tactfully."

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Thursday, May 30, 1940

With what is going on in the world these days it is extremely difficult to think coherently or to plan hopefully. Whatever I do is done under the drive of sheer necessity or mechanized routine. Yet now if ever is the testing time of the faith in the Power that makes for salvation. But this does not mean necessarily adhering to the easy going optimistic conceptions of the values involved in





that faith, conceptions which have been knocked into a cocked hat by current events. One fundamental oversight in the pre-war (the present one) optimism has been the failure to see in nazism a world revolution directed against the hypocritical capitalist democracy. Unfortunately we Jews have been maneouvered into the position of having to defend this kind of democracy, because the moment we begin drawing distinctions between genuine and counterfeit democracy we are accused of being communists. But the fact is that, viewed objectively from the standpoint of the masses of mankind, existing democracy has meant little more than freedom to starve. Mankind has grown sick of having to live even more precariously, because of the stupidity of its leaders in dealing with the overproduction due to technological improvement and with the selfishness of the plutocrats. Anything that gibes the least promise of overcoming the fear of starvation and homelessness is seized upon like a straw by a drowning man. Totalitarianism is such a straw. For all any one knows it may prove a raft. If by force of the most unhappy combination of circumstances, we Jews have come to be in a position where for purposes of mass propaganda we supply the necessary concept of the "Devil" with which to belabor and damn plutocratic democracy, the fault is as much our own as that of our enemies. I am beginning to agree with E. Kaufmann and others among our Hebrew writers who maintain that the cardinal sin of our people is having permitted ourselves to remain in a state of alienage for so long a time. We should either have become absorbed or have found some land for ourselves. No matter how much the population of the various countries which are invaded by the nazi suffer for a time, neither they nor their children can ever know the life-long mental agony of the average Jew.



Of course, the only time when we could have exercised any choice is probably when we began to be emancipated. So long as our ancestors actually accepted the traditional version of the diaspora, they could not be expected to allow themselves to be absorbed by the general population, which was possible only at the price of accepting Christianity. On the other hand, when the Jews began to be emancipated they still did not have that choice open to them without becoming Christians. In other words while theoretically speaking Kaufmann may be right, practically it was the hangover of Christianity which prevented the Jews from abandoning their anomalous position. Such a far sighted scheme as ~~huxley~~ Napoleon entertained for a while, as that of transferring the Jews to Palestine was too closely bound up with his own changing whims and fortunes to be taken seriously. All in all the actual fate of the Jews seems to be the outcome of an unfortunate combination of historical circumstances, for which no one is to blame. The inherent stupidity and inertia of human nature are responsible for so many unfortunate blunders that go to make up human history, that I cannot help wondering how man ever came upon the notion of a Power that makes for salvation. This is where Barth, Niebuhr et al came in and propose the transcendent origin of the God idea. Perhaps they are right. Note how easily one is suggestable to all kinds of irrationalism when under stress of tragic events like those which are occurring these days.

However I may succumb momentarily to the seduction of Barthianism, I do not think I shall ever get to the point where I shall become an intuitionist and completely throw reason overboard as is increasingly becoming the fashion nowadays. Bergson started the fashion at the beginning of this century in France. It reached our own Jewish circles only recently. Goldmann and Kadushin are





its spokesmen here. I see now that Mumford and Waldo Frank have gone off their heads too. It appears that Kohler, Kafka and the rest of the Gestalt psychologists have contributed considerably to the present ~~erruption~~ of irrationalism. Or more correctly stated, something has happened to mankind which has resulted politically in totalitarianism, psychologically in the Gestalt theory, philosophically in intuitionism, religiously in irrationalism and so down the line.

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In the midst of the furious tornado which is sweeping over the world, I continue to potter around with Reconstructionism. What else can I do. So long as I live I have to function, and that is the only way in which I can function.

Guzik came to see me last Saturday afternoon for suggestions to be taken up at the next meeting of the Reconstructionist Foundation. I pointed out to him that as far as the men on the Board are concerned, they ought to make their objective the organization of a staff which would take care of the publications and propaganda. Next to making it possible for Eugene Kohn to give half his time to the matter of publications, they should obtain the means to engage a field secretary. The second suggestion was that of the 25 members of the Board, 10 ought to be women. Their specific task should consist in organizing the volunteer phase of the movement. They should try 1) to get men and women to volunteer to act as club and other group leaders; 2) to make provision for the organization of curricula for various kinds of groups, such as study groups, choral groups, worship groups, art groups; and 3) to contact institutions where such groups could be housed. These groups would be of two kinds: a) those selected from existing organizations, like Y's, congregations, etc. and b) unattached groups.



Immediately after I spoke to Guzik I went to see Julia Dushkin to ask her to join the Board. She wanted to know more specifically what her task would be; otherwise she seemed willing to join the Board. The next day (Sunday) Dr. Krasnow Thau, an alumna of the Teachers Institute, called on some matter pertaining to the TI Alumni. I broached the idea that she ~~xxxxx~~<sup>become</sup> interested in Reconstructionism. I got her consent to go on the Board. On Monday I had Mrs. Bertha Schoolman come to see me and I likewise invited her to become a member of the Board. Her response was whole-hearted and encouraging. From the moment she accepted the invitation she began planning, and the next day she, of her own accord, called up and made some suggestions concerning people to be contacted.

Tuesday morning two students of the Seminary, Greenberg and Bennet handed me a copy of the article they had written on Reconstructionism for the Hebrew publication of the Histadrut Ha-Moar, Niv. This led me to ask Greenberg whether he and other students would be willing to lead Reconstructionist groups. He readily assented. The question now is whether Finkelstein would permit the students to become active in Reconstructionism. I dread the idea of his interfering with the realization of my plan to have Reconstructionist groups develop along lines similar to those of the Young Israel movement. But his is by no means the only dictatorship with which we shall have to reckon in the next few years. The forces of evil extend over a wide front and they are all in step. It is only the forces of reason and enlightenment that march unevenly and when the lag is greater than the advance.

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Karpf, the head of the Graduate School for Jewish Social work called on me this morning and told me the story of the rupture in the negotiations with the Hebrew Union College, concerning which he telephoned to me the other day. The Trustees of the College had voted 11 to 7 in favor of taking in the Graduate School and shortly after that the directors of the Union of Hebrew Congregations ratified the amalgamation by the narrow margin of 1 vote, 13 to 12. Then began the negotiations concerning the conditions of the amalgamation. The Trustees of the College, especially the president, Mack, the brother of Judge Julian Mack, kept on haggling about every point in the agreement and whittling down considerably the conditions to which they had assented originally. Finally Karpf's patience gave way and he wrote out a statement reviewing the negotiations. In that statement ~~the~~ the Trustees did not appear to good advantage, and they wanted him to retract it. Morgenstern who had been cooperative, charged Karpf with displaying animus. One thing led to the other, and finally negotiations broke off completely.

Karpf thinks that the main cause for the break was the fact that negotiations are going on at present to take over the Jewish Institute of Religion. Judge Mack, the chairman of the JIR Board of Trustees is bringing special pressure to bear on his brother to facilitate the merger. The Hebrew Union College might digest ~~the~~ one school, but two schools at the same time might give it indigestion. This may be the reason the Trustees put obstacles in the way of the amalgamation with the school. My own personal opinion is that Karpf probably displayed too much independence and was not too tactful in his insistence upon having things his own way.

Incidentally, I learned from him the names of three members of the New York Foundation who were who insisted upon discontinuing the support of the school on the ground that it makes for Jewish



separation. They were <sup>Ar</sup>thur Sulzberger of the N.Y. Times, Fred-  
eric Warburg and David (!) Hyman. So fanatical is Sulzberger in  
his opposition to the school that he made an extra trip to the  
convention of the Union of Hebrew Congregations to prevent their  
voting in favor of the amalgamation with the HUC.

= Now that the school is in danger of being liquidated Karpf  
went to see Finkelstein yesterday. Finkelstein was very cordial in  
his attention to Karpf and offered him the hospitality of the Semi-  
nary. Karpf seemed inclined to accept it. I only hope that the  
TI and the other departments affiliated with it will not be crowded  
into a minimum of space as a result of that hospitality.

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Friday, May 31, 1940

The demonstration school of the Teachers Institute, which  
is the subject of negotiations among the three institutions con-  
cerned, the Jewish Education Committee, the Seminary and the Cong-  
regation Anshe Chesed, will, I hope, finally manage to become a  
reality. In strict accord with the formalities I have duly in-  
formed Finky of the decision of the Teachers Institute Faculty at  
its meeting a week ago last Monday to accept the school subject to  
certain conditions, and he duly acknowledged, "faithfully as ever"  
(which to me means "never") the receipt of my letter and his inter-  
est and consent, subject to the approval of Edgar Nathan (the 10th  
director of the Seminary). In the meantime Scharfstein started a  
rumpus at the meeting of the Faculty because he hadn't been con-  
sulted, by Dinin with whom he wants to share the job (which pays  
\$1000) of supervising the work of the school, from the standpoint  
of the TI interest in it. To appease Scharfstein, I asked him to  
visit Hershon's school and to report on Hershon's qualifications  
for the principality of the demonstration school. While there he





was told by Hershon that Dushkin had engaged him (Hershon) for the principalship. This added fuel to the fire. I got a letter from Scharfstein complaining that he merely wasted his time in visiting the school. At the meeting last Monday between him, Dinin and myself, which took place at my house, he let the cat out of the bag and made it plain that he wanted to be in on the job of supervising the school. Dinin showed himself to advantage by being rather pliant, and the meeting ended with their decision to iron the matter out between themselves.

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The group of Seminary graduates that Jacob Grossman had haphazardly got together met with me again last Wednesday. Although the meeting of little over two weeks ago was to have been the final one this year, those in the group expressed a desire to meet at least ~~xxxxx~~ once or twice more before the summer. On the other hand, I myself rather enjoyed the discussions and I was really glad that they wanted to get together again. Present were: J. J. Newman, Schwartz, Miller, Parzen, I. Hoffman, Jacob and Lewis Grossman, Goldberg (of 93 St. synagogue) and Radin.

The discussion turned on the question of the re-evaluation of the concept "chosen people." I called attention to my statement in "Judaism in Transition," p. 124. Jacob Grossman then asked why it was not possible for the change I had made in the liturgy by substituting (p.147) for . But Newman interposed with the usual argument that the people who came to synagogue needed to be emotionalized into Judaism and not merely to have the siddur changed. I agreed with him on his major premise but disagreed with him in his implied minor premise that the way to emotionalize them was not to tamper with traditional views or practices. Using the idea of chosen people as an illus-



tration, I suggested some realistic facts and possibilities for which that idea might serve as a genuine index. None can gainsay the historical fact that our people achieved a collective self-awareness which found expression in ethical monotheism. If we are not a chosen people, our ancestors were. Our own claim to distinction can be only a conditional one. The condition is that we survive as a people. If we shall succeed in that we shall give the greatest collective demonstration of the power of the spirit. If we can manage to retain a sense of unity, mutual responsibility and common destiny despite persecution which is directed chiefly at our alienage and has nothing to do with traditional religion, despite our lack of a central authority or state, and our dependence on voluntarism despite the insistence of so-called liberals upon our giving up our individuality and despite our differences in world outlook then we are indeed a unique people in being able to transcend the limitations of human nature. Such survival implies that we are discovering new spiritual values in our very persistence, that we are capable of transforming heteronomous into autonomous sanctions, that we have the strength of will to say "nay" to well meaning but mistaken friends, that we are capable of performing the great moral feat of discovering what men have in common amid the many factors that divide them. Any people that can attain such spiritual heights deserves to be called "chosen." Even if only a faithful remnant is capable of such achievement, it is entitled to this high designation.

Another aspect to the notion of "chosen people" is that suggested by the statement in Amos III 2. The traditional view, which conforms with that statement, is that our alienage with its attendant miseries, is the penalty for our sins. In the revaluation of the concept of "chosen people" we must find a substitute for





for the traditional connection between that concept and the fact of our wretchedness. We might find such a substitute, if we analyzed the position into which we have been maneouvered by our relation to democracy. We are the beneficiaries of democracy. We should not, however, have become so enamored of the rights it conferred upon us as to have forgotten the duties which it should have been the task of democracy to inculcate in all who wish to live by it. We should have taken our "mission" seriously and not permitted ourselves to be guilty of the same selfishness and hypocrisy as the rest of the world in the application of democratic principles to politics and economics. Had we taken our religion seriously we would not have condoned the adoption by our own ambitious Jews of the prevalent methods of heartless exploitation and ruthless competition. The very fact that our enemies have evolved the Jewish bogey as responsible for the sins of democracy indicates that whether we want it or not, our very existence is bound up with that of democracy, more so than that of any other people. We might therefore paraphrase the statement of Amos to read: Only you of all families of the earth have I caused to be dependent upon the establishment of freedom, justice and peace, therefore it is your fate to bear the brunt of the suffering in wake of the violation of these laws of Mine which you call democracy.

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Saturday, June 1, 1940

But "unity" is a deed and not a mere statement," rightly says Hocking (The Elements of Individualism, p.105). "The self assertion of the social whole "he maintains "naturally takes in political character...The will to exist must take the form of the will to act." This principle accounts for what has been wrong with all the synagogue trends in modern Jewish life and explains why the



Zionist movement has been the only one with any meaning for the future of ~~Zionist~~ Judaism. Those synagogue trends have been content to let the Jews delude themselves into being able to survive as a people by simply thinking about unity but not translating that unity into action. How to "enact" our unity without giving rise to ~~unfounded~~ suspicions that we are utilizing that unity for purposes of power or dominion over others, but simply for self-preservation and the development of our social heritage is no easy problem to solve. Yet it would seem that by making the rehabilitation of Palestine the common objective of our unity, we not only enact that unity but free it from the very possibility of being regarded as utilized for sinister purposes.

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Sunday, June 2, 1940

This morning as I sat down in the park I overheard a conversation carried on by a Danish couple and a Jewish woman communist concerning religion. The three people seemed to be fairly intelligent. Nevertheless they displayed in the course of their conversation more ignorance of the subject matter they were discussing than could be dispelled in a year of intensive instruction. But the basis of that ignorance, and what would have to be the main point of attack in any attempt to educate such people, is the complete lack of an evolutionary approach to beliefs and institutions. The average person evaluates what has come down from various periods of the remote past as if it appeared alongside the news of the day. Finding that it does not fit into his habitual categories he rejects it as meaningless. The inference is that the most important objective is all social education must be the inculcation of the evolutionary approach. That approach is, incidentally, also the only one that enables us to adjust ourselves hopefully in tragic times like these.

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Tuesday, June 4, 1940

When I was in Pittsburgh I saw Rabbi Goodman A. Rose. He is temperamentally conservative and pietist with enough of an ethical sense to make it possible for one to live with him, even if one does not agree with him. After he heard me give the talk on the teaching of religion he mentioned some work he had done on the teaching of the Bible stories and asked me whether I would care to give him my criticism. On reading that material, I find myself in a predicament. Naturally I will refer him to what I say on the subject in Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 500-503. But how can I make him understand the absurdity of a statement like the following which comes at the end of the first lesson: "Bring our lesson to close by telling them, 'God came down and told us what He wanted us to do. He gave us commandments. One was "Honor thy father and thy mother." One was to keep the Shabbos. I'll read you what He said. Read Exod. XX, 8-11"? In the helps to the teacher for the lesson on the story of Cain and Abel he suggests preparing the minds of the children by telling them the legend of the sun and the Moon. "Tell the children frankly," he says, "that you are going to tell them a fable." This is the furthest in frankness that he permits himself or the teacher to go. What is one to do with some timid souls? I am quite sure he doesn't believe in the historicity of the Torah narrative, yet I know that he wouldn't dream of stating his attitude frankly to his people, not because he is a hypocrite, but because he genuinely believes that it would undermine their religious faith. His is the pragmatism which is rightly condemned by those who consider truth as independent of any such well-intentioned considerations. Yet most vociferous in such condemnation are men of his type, who defend their withholding the truth in religious teaching on the ground that it would be upsetting.



A graduate of the Teachers Institute by the name of Gottlieb is working for the Masters degree in Jewish pedagogy. To meet his requirements in the course in religion, I advised him to read the following: The first part of Ellbogen's "Der judieshe Gotterdient" which is translated into Hebrew; Israel Abraham's annotated edition of the Prayer Book (p.150) Morris Joseph's "Judaism as Creed and Life" and my "The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion."

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Wednesday, June 5, 1940

After the meeting of the Seminary Faculty this morning Finky took me aside<sup>de</sup> and while we were both standing he made a proposition concerning the Teachers Institute which left me stunned. Referring to the fact that Scharfstein and Bavli had come to see him with regard to the teachers' salaries, he said that it might be a good plan for the Jewish Education Committee to take over the TI. This interview to which he referred was reported at a recent meeting of the TI Faculty. Scharfstein then stated that F. had told them that the Seminary was running on a deficit and that there was no~~x~~ likelihood of anything being done about the salaries of the TI instructors. It is quite evident that F. is out to knife the TI.

When I have to deal with that kind of a person, toward whom I feel as I would toward a Gestapo official, I get so confused that I am at a loss what to say. My first response was that the JEC would not consider taking over the TI because it is against their policy to show preference to any one type of teacher training institution. On the other hand I said I wouldn't want to turn the TI over to the JEC which is influenced by men like Willen and Hexter who object to anything Jewish. He wasn't impressed by what I said, because I think he has quite made up his mind to eliminate the TI. He mentioned the fact that Hendricks, Strauss, the young Stroock and Rosenman would naturally be in favor of having the JEC take it over.









